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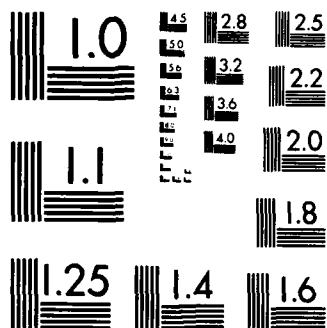
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A NATIONAL STRATEGY HIERARCHY

Alan Vick

July 1984

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### The Rand Paper Series

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Over the last few years we have witnessed an expansion, remarkable in its depth and breadth, of public interest in technical nuclear and conventional weapons and strategy issues<sup>1</sup>. Heretofore debates over the acquisition and deployment of new weapons and associated employment concepts were the exclusive domain of a relatively small cadre of defense professionals.

Although considerable public involvement in foreign policy debates has occurred periodically throughout American history and was certainly evident during the divisive Vietnam war, this interest has rarely carried over into the arcana of weapons research, development, acquisition, deployment and employment nor the murky world of deterrence theory, strategy, doctrine and tactics.

Current interest, in contrast, spans the gamut from the theological to the scientific. And an overwhelming amount of information is available to the interested observer through periodicals, books and government publications. Even the brightest student of such issues may, however, find the sheer volume of materials and diversity of views daunting. Furthermore, many of the essays and analyses found in the public literature, particularly those on nuclear arms issues, are one-dimensional. While most essays offer lengthy introductions on the evolution of nuclear strategy or whatever and place their contribution within a broader policy context, few seem to recognize the difference between tactical and strategic issues.

The decade-long debate over ICBM vulnerability is a case in point. Many essays addressing the vulnerability of American ICBMs to a Soviet first-strike with ICBMs contained lengthy sections the authors characterized as strategic. Yet, the same papers usually focused on the problem of fratricide, CEPs, and so on. These issues are tactical or procedural and while of vast importance to the debate, they are decidedly not strategic.

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<sup>1</sup>This paper was presented as a guest lecture in the "Nuclear Arms Race: Choices and Issues" course at the University of California, Irvine on July 5, 1984. The author wishes to thank Rand colleague Phillip Romero for his insights on this subject.

This suggests two weaknesses in our approach to such problems. First, we ignore available logical means of organizing our thoughts on military problems. One author will start with the tactical, another with the strategic. Second, our vocabulary is in desperate need of discipline. A means to approach the problem systematically, an architecture if you will, is needed to make sense of the political, economic, and military dimensions of national strategy. Moreover, an internally consistent vocabulary is truly needed if one wishes to discuss strategy with any precision. This paper suggests such an approach via a national strategy hierarchy that links national goals and the means by which they are pursued. This hierarchy is based on a ranking commonly, although not completely, accepted in military circles. This hierarchy starts with a nation's most basic goals, then translates them successively into national strategy, military doctrine, concepts of operations, and tactics, incorporating political, economic and force posture constraints. In an attempt to impose a modicum of discipline on our terminology, the Joint Chiefs of Staff<sup>2</sup> definitions for strategy, doctrine, concepts of operations and tactics are used exclusively in this paper.

A national strategy hierarchy imposes a top-down architecture on the formulation of all national political, economic, and military policies, plans and actions. It begins with the identification of national priorities and ends with specific actions in support of those priorities.

Consider a nation's fundamental goals. My Rand colleague Carl Builder suggests that these are related to the pursuit of either survival, sovereignty or well-being (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> A nation must first be concerned with the survival of its population, property and institutions. Considerable importance is normally attributed to this goal and appropriate effort expended in its pursuit. Many would argue

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<sup>2</sup>See *Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 1: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 1979.

<sup>3</sup>Carl Builder, *A Conceptual Framework for a National Strategy on Nuclear Arms*. R-2598-AF, Santa Monica, CA. : The Rand Corporation, 1980.

that the equipping, training and fielding of modern military forces constitutes the government's major responsibility to its people. It certainly represents a massive draw on the national treasury.

Once survival is guaranteed (to the extent possible), a nation can turn its attention, resources and energy toward sovereignty. Maintaining control over its own territory, protecting its commerce and citizens are all sovereignty-related goals. In general, territory and commerce are not directly tied to survival. Still, a severe threat to one's territory or one's participation in the international economy is likely to be correctly equated with survival. Even a failure to control one's own citizens might be a threat to the survival of the nation, if not the people. Although primarily a problem for totalitarian states, any state will be more susceptible to outside aggression if internal order is lost.

Once survival and sovereignty are assured, a nation can then pursue health, personal security and prosperity goals. For many, a nation's success is measured by the extent to which these goals are realized. This view suggests that the state and its massive military, law and order and social service institutions exist so that the people can concentrate on achieving these goals. Finally, other goals, such as territorial and ideological expansion, may be pursued along with these critical objectives. Indeed, what one nation defines as a basic survival issue another may view as expansionist. There is, after all, no accepted set of criteria to distinguish between these types of objectives.

Furthermore, as Builder points out, considerable tension exists between the fundamental national goals. Consider sovereignty. Hobbes tells us that groups of people first organized to avoid the "nasty, brutish and short" character of the state of nature. They gave power to an entity above them, the sovereign, so that they might survive. Thus, sovereignty was a first-order goal and simultaneously a means to pursue their real goals of survival. Yet, without sovereignty survival would have been questionable for many. Once survival was achieved, then attention could be directed toward the pursuit of well-being goals. Generally stated, the successful achievement of key survival and well-being goals--details vary according to culture, history and so on--

leads to popular support for the government (the sovereign), reinforcing sovereignty and completing the circle (see Figure 2). Some would argue that sovereignty no longer contributes to survival, that, on the contrary, the modern nation-state is a great threat to the survival of the entire species. Thus, the intransitive nature of these goals makes a true hierarchy problematic.

These problems notwithstanding, nations do reconcile conflicting goals, identify priorities and pursue some goals with greater fervor than others. The reconciliation of conflicting goals, identification of priorities and development of a scheme of action produce national strategy, the most comprehensive and authoritative plan.

Nations use strategy--sometimes referred to as grand strategy--more or less successfully to pursue the fundamental national objectives discussed earlier. National strategy (see Figure 3) is composed of political, economic and military elements. Usually the economic and military elements will be subordinate to the political. Nevertheless, the final product--national strategy--must be informed by all three elements. A politically sophisticated strategy that fails to consider the dangers and opportunities associated with a specific application of military force will likely fail. Alternatively, flawless military tactics, operations, doctrine and strategy cannot make up for lack of political vision. During the Vietnam war, for example, national strategy was weakened by a lack of understanding of Vietnamese history and culture and the dual nature of the war (i.e., both an insurgency and a conventional war). Basic confusion over the nature of the conflict inhibited the integration of political, economic and military means to pursue the political objective of a Western-oriented evolving democracy in the South. Our inability to defeat the insurgents politically combined with our unwillingness to defeat the North Vietnamese militarily (the means were certainly at our disposal) constrained strategy, producing an ad hoc national policy bearing little resemblance to strategy.

Once national strategy is promulgated, the armed services will use their respective service doctrines (see Figure 4) to guide the application of force. The theater commander will provide his concept of operations (see Figure 5) to subordinate units, linking their operations



to military doctrine and national strategy. Bombing industrial targets, launching ground offensives with field armies or army groups, committing theater reserves and disrupting enemy shipping are all examples of theater-level military operations. Such operations are complex, meticulously planned and coordinated, highly visible, and tightly linked to national strategy. They epitomize the military dimension of national strategy. Finally, the tactical level refers to operations by army divisions or smaller units all the way down to the rifle squad. Tactics (see Figure 6) can refer to warfighting at this organizational level or to the specific procedures that, say, fighter pilots use to down enemy aircraft or infantrymen use to attack and capture a hill.

These various elements can be combined into a national strategy hierarchy (see Figure 7). The solid lines in the figure illustrate the translation of broad national security goals into specific plans, policy, and battlefield actions. The broken lines illustrate the very real political, economic and force posture constraints on the strategy formulation process. This process rarely achieves the idealized flow of clear, attainable national objectives into policy, plans and actions. Often technological, political and institutional factors will drive strategy, doctrine and weapons acquisition, forcing out sound military considerations.

For analytical purposes, however, the hierarchy offers a means of organizing ideas that is consistent with actual policy/strategy formulation, perhaps encouraging a less haphazard approach to the discussion of strategy and related concepts.

# BUILDER'S HIERARCHY OF GOALS

## SURVIVAL

Population Property Institutions



## SOVEREIGNTY

Government Commerce People



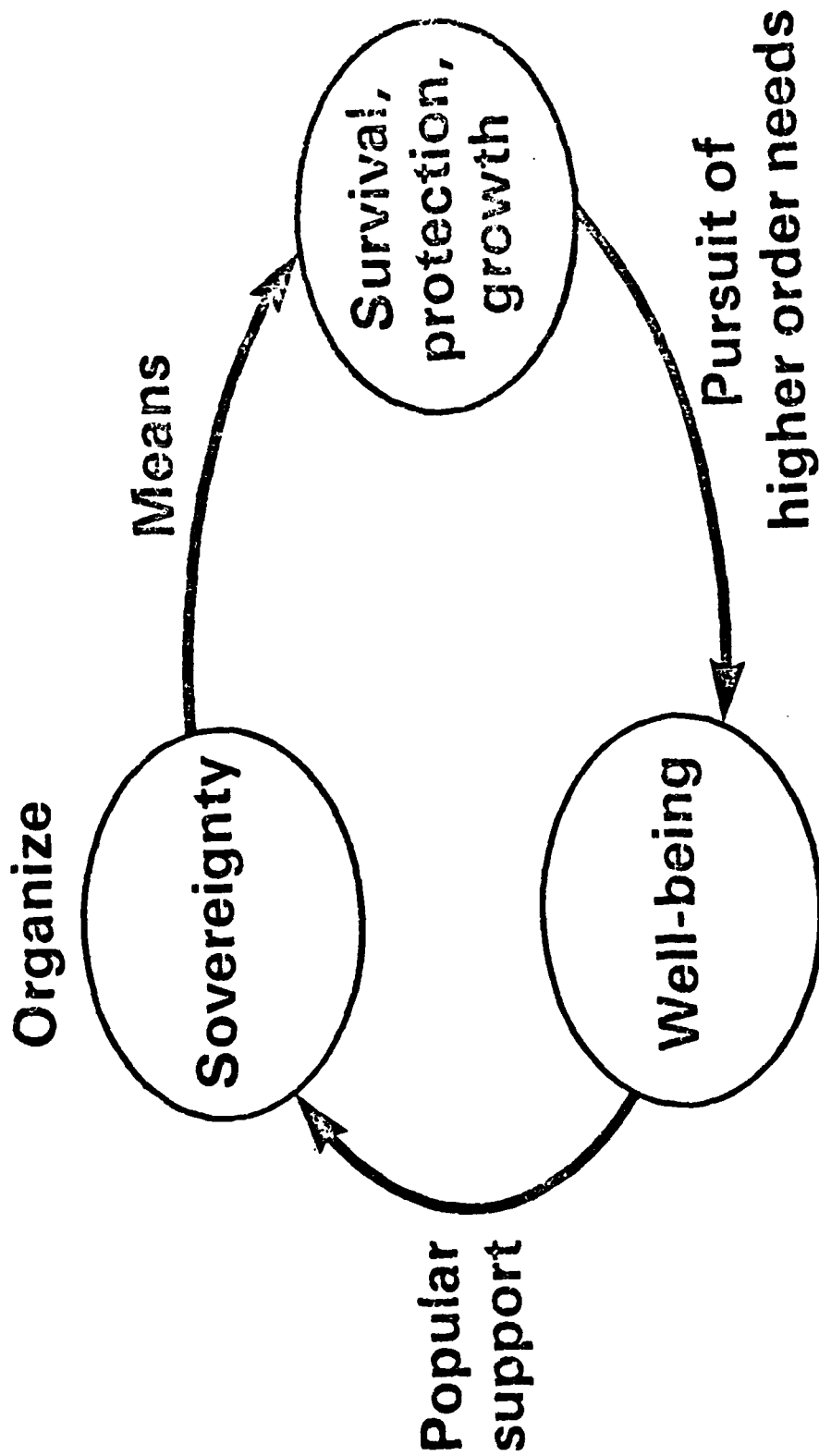
## WELL-BEING

Prosperity Health Security

**Rand**

Figure 1

# INTRANSITIVITY IN NATIONAL GOALS



**Rand**

Figure 2

# STRATEGY

The art and science of developing and using political, economic, psychological and military forces as necessary during peace and war, to afford the maximum support to policies in order to increase the probabilities and favorable consequences of victory and to lessen the chances of defeat.

Read

Figure 3

# DOCTRINE

Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives.

**Rand**

Figure 4

# CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A verbal or graphic statement, in broad outline, of a commander's assumptions or intent in regard to an operation or series of operations

**Revised**

Figure 5

## TACTICS

The ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other and/or to the enemy in order to utilize their full potentialities.

**Rand**

Figure 6

# NATIONAL STRATEGY HIERARCHY

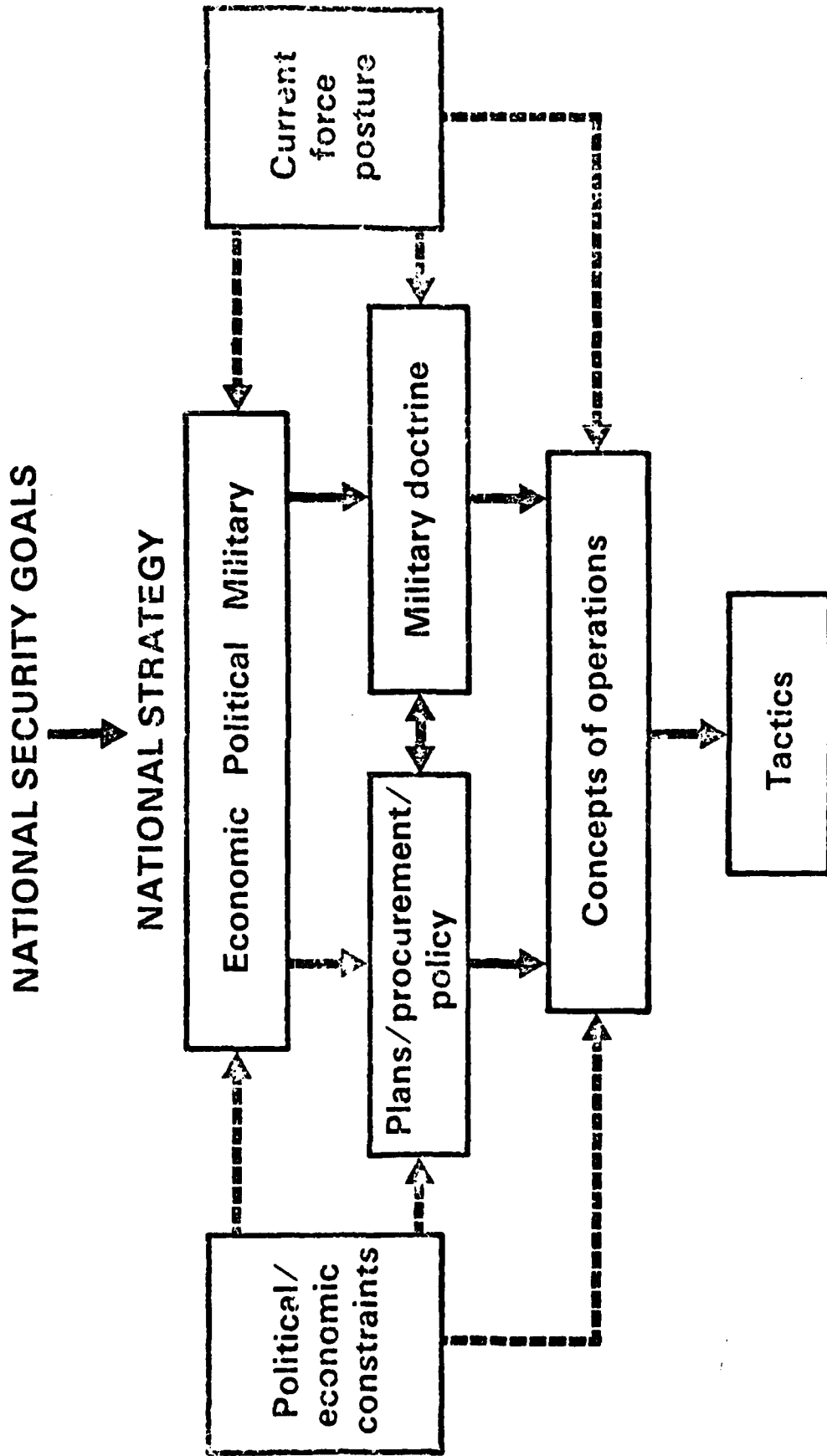


Figure 7



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